

No. 18.

FACTS FOR THE PEOPLE

MR. BLAKE ON THE LABOR QUESTION.

HIS PLATFORM SCRUTINIZED.

"I have shown that I favored advantages to the workingmen in the way of savings banks, of advanced factory legislation, of the development of the co-operative principle in production and distribution, of profit sharing, of arbitration, of the abolition of contract labor in prisons, of the prohibition of Chinese immigration, of the abolition of assisted passages and the entire change of our emigration plans."

—Hon. E. Blake in Queen's Hall.

What says the record? Sir Richard Cartwright, the *Globe* and nearly all the Opposition leaders and organs have time and again attacked the Government for refusing to change the rate of interest paid on deposits in the Government and Postal Savings banks. The Government last session, through the Finance Minister, declared it was clear that while we pay 4 per cent. interest abroad for our loans we should pay the same rate of interest to the working classes of our own country to encourage them in habits of thrift and economy for the benefit of themselves and their families. Sir Richard Cartwright and Mr. McMullen, acting as spokesmen of the Opposition, advocated the reduction of the rate to 3 per cent. Mr. Blake sat next the former and made no objection. That is the way Mr. Blake favored advantages to the workingman in the matter of savings banks. He sat still and said nothing in favor of the retention of the higher rate of interest.

When the question of factory legislation was brought up in the Commons, Mr. Blake objected to Mr. Bergin's bill on the ground that he did not believe it was constitutional. The house he held could not pass such a measure. That is the extent to which Mr. Blake favored advanced factory legislation. The extent to which he has studied the labor problem is seen to be slight indeed, inasmuch as he declares that he favors the co-operative principle and profit sharing as well. The co-operative principle proposes the co-operation of the wage receiving classes, so that by the aggregation of small sums of money capital may be secured to enable labor to compete with capital in the hand of one man or a firm. Profit sharing is based upon the principle of binding labor and capital together by making the man who supplies the business capacity and the money and the men who supply the mechanical skill have a common interest in the profits, according to some established proportion. A man cannot very well be in favor both of the co-operative principle and the profit sharing system.

Mr. Blake evidently desired to catch the votes of the workingmen who held to the co-operative principle and of those who believe in the profit sharing plan.

As regards abolition of contract labor in prisons, Mr. Blake's record is not a good one. When Sir John Macdonald's Government was in power in 1873 this question came up. The Government promised that the convict contract system should be done away with as fast as the existing contracts would allow. When the Mackenzie Government went into power Sir John, in 1875, asked what course the Government purposed to follow. Mr. Mackenzie said he thought they might be able to employ the convicts in manufacturing the greater portion of the rolling stock required on the railways. Mr. Mills said the convicts should be taught trades, because if the Government engaged them at unprofitable pursuits the loss to the state would have to be made up by putting a tax on the industries of the country, and besides if the convicts were taught trades it would be a practical advantage to them when they went back to the community. Mr. Blake sat still. He said nothing in favor of the workingman. He never raised his voice in support of Sir John and the workingman. To-day, no thanks to Mr. Blake, who never raised a finger to help, Sir John is able to state that by the policy of his Government the contract system has been abolished, and the convicts are now employed in work that interferes as little as possible with the industries of the country. Further, without a word from Mr. Blake favorable to it, without a particle of practical aid from Mr. Blake, the Government last session passed a law absolutely prohibiting the importation of prison made articles from the United States into Canada.

Mr. Blake says he is in favor of prohibition of Chinese immigration. He never said so in Parliament. Mr. Mackenzie had the courage of his convictions, and said he "believed in the laws which afforded an asylum to all who came into our country, irrespective of color, hair or anything else." Mr. Mills said, "the proposition to prevent Chinese coming into Canada was not creditable to this age or country." Yet Mr. Blake's "favorable regard" of prohibition of Chinese immigration amounted to sitting in his seat and saying nothing to help the Government and the workingmen.

As regards "assisted passages," the

Prime Minister stated last year that the Government had come to the conclusion either to cease granting such aid altogether or to confine it to agricultural laborers actually settling in Manitoba and the Northwest and becoming consumers of the manufactures of the older provinces. Mr. Blake states that he favors the establishment of a bureau of labor statistics. The Government had taken steps to forward that important branch before Mr. Blake had ever said one word in the Commons in favor of it. In point of fact, he has never yet said in Parliament a word in support of it. On the contrary, he has condemned the increased expenditure of the country and has declared that expenses must be cut down.

Taking a general view of Mr. Blake's position towards labor questions, we find that his favorable regard has been invariably confined to holding his tongue while his colleagues and political supporters were attacking the Government for what it was doing in behalf of the labor of the country; to following in the wake of Sir John A. Macdonald in every effort Sir John has made to bring the rights of labor within the sphere of practical legislation, and to claiming that he has always been favorable because while others of his party have attacked the workingmen he has sat silent.

THE MANUFACTURERS' ANSWER TO MR. BLAKE.

The manufacturers, whom Mr. Blake in the tariff speech, which he reads, invites to enter his political parlor, have given their answer. At their meeting at Toronto on Tuesday, they pronounced the Liberal leader's statements to be "involved, uncertain and indefinite," and not to be depended upon. The resolution they adopted reads as follows:—

"That this meeting of manufacturers and millers, representing almost every branch of industry and every section of the province of Ontario, hereby places on record their unanimous opinion that on the maintenance of the National Policy depends the continued prosperity of Canada; and that its maintenance can only be assured by a return of the Liberal-Conservative party to power on the 22nd instant, the tariff policy of the Reform party being involved, uncertain and indefinite."

This is short and to the point. Nothing that Mr. Blake said justifies the statement that he is reconciled to the National Policy. Even his own friends recognize this in their comments upon it; and those who are threatened agree with them Mr. Blake has had a vote of non-confidence passed upon him.